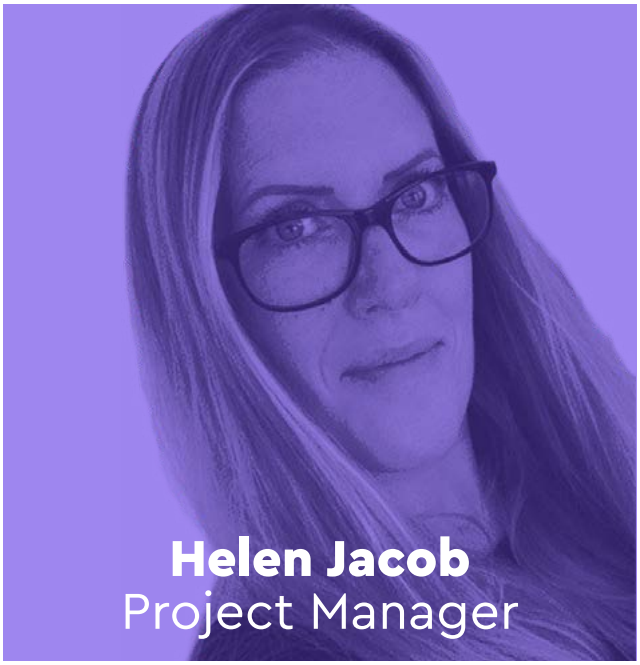

Helen was drawn to working at Nominet late last year when she was approached by a talent acquisition manager from within Nominet's HR team.

"At the time I was working as a project manager in a 'software as a service' company in Oxfordshire, basically specialising in Supply Chain process automation for FMCG clients, and that's when I had started to get to grips with data. Before that I was at UNIPART, starting in administration, then explored different opportunities within the company. I was there around 18–19 years. I have a strong memory from those days of there being lots of talk about the 'digital revolution' and the way the world was going in terms of digitalisation, so I had already begun to lean into that concept when I went to work for the software company. Overall, my career transition into tech was gradual, but now I am here, and I really enjoy the work because 'every day's a school day' as the saying goes, and **I want to be learning and developing. Why shouldn't I?**"

Building relationships

Helen works within the cyber section of the business, as a project manager. "Our work is in providing governance and control over projects we deliver to our customers and reaching out to internal cyber teams – engineers, architects – or communicating with external customers to understand their needs and deliver projects that satisfy their requirements", Helen says. "I spend a good amount of my time building relationships and understanding what it is we are delivering, so I work really closely with the team to help pull all of this together. It requires lots of self-discipline!"

Helen is frank about her ambitions for her career in tech, stating that she wants to work towards being a Programme Manager. "I believe that is totally possible at Nominet – I have already spoken to my manager about it. I want to continue the path I am on but work on getting further. I know it could take a number of years, but I am determined to keep building on this career path, and I will get there."

Don't question yourself

Even with her obvious motivation, and the support of her team and colleagues, Helen is still aware of the gender bias that exists within the wider industry. "I think it is generally more male-orientated, yes, and I think the top roles definitely show a distinct gender bias, but there could be all kinds of reasons for that. However, there are 10 people in my team, including a male manager, and we have a completely equal gender split with five men and five women."

The advice to women who are inspired by her example is simple and direct: "Just follow your heart. If you want to get into tech, you can start by getting an education in a STEM subject, but you could also just reach out to people in those industries. There is training available if you look for it."

Nominet, for example, has signed up to the Tech Talent Charter, to show commitment to greater diversity in the UK tech workforce. The promise here is to ensure Nominet creates a working environment that supports personal development, and battles stereotypes and old-fashioned ways of thinking.

"Don't ever feel you aren't going to be accepted just because you are female, or don't have exactly the right qualifications", concludes Helen. "Type 'Careers in Tech' into Google, find out what interests you, and then go for it. If you have the passion, don't question yourself. And don't be afraid of knockbacks, everyone gets them."

> *"Don't be afraid of knockbacks, everyone gets them"*